

# The Republic of Belarus or the Belarussian republic?

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Belarus has not broken off its bonds with Moscow after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Throughout the whole period of the Belarussian independence we can observe the country's strong political, economic and military dependence on Russia. This dependence allows Russia to control, and even shape, the processes that take place in Belarus in all the areas mentioned.

One can speak about the existence of one common space of security and defence, dominated by Russia. The functioning of the Belarussian economy depends, to a great extent, on the supply of raw materials from Russia. Russia has ample possibilities to influence both internal political processes in Belarus and its foreign policy. These strong ties between Belarus and Russia, as well as the lasting Russian influence seen against hugely disproportionate potential of both states, makes one raise the following question: to what extent is Belarus an independent country and to what extent is it subordinate to Moscow?

## Theses

1. For Russia Belarus is an area of strategic significance, particularly for its geographical location in the direct vicinity of Poland, a member of NATO, and of the Baltic States, which also aspire to join the North Atlantic Alliance. And the shortest and the cheapest through way for the Russian raw materials and products to the West and to Kaliningrad leads via Belarus as well. For these reasons a basic goal of the Russian policy towards Belarus is to keep the country in the zone of its direct influence.

For Belarus a close cooperation with Russia is a precondition to maintain its national stability. At the same time this cooperation makes the country more and more dependent on its stronger partner. Russia is able to control Belarus by means of exerting its influence on the Belarussian politics, economy and defence. The basis for such influence is a considerable dependence of Belarus on Russia in all those areas and, to a lesser extent, the existence of the Union State.

2. The fact that the rule of Lukashenka has been recognised by Moscow as legal enables him, to a considerable extent, to function in the internal arena but also, although to a limited extent, on the international scene. This situation allows Russia to exert its influence on the decisions made by the Belarussian president. This has become particularly visible during the period just before the presidential election in Belarus. While trying to win the Rus-

sian support, Lukashenka has been made to make numerous economic concessions.

The cooperation with Moscow is a basic element of the Belarussian foreign policy. The Russian patronage and neighbourhood guarantee that the Belarussian president does not need to take into account the opinion of the West, which comes out in support of democracy and human rights in Belarus.

3. The functioning of the Belarussian economy is, to a great extent, dependent on Russia. Russia is the main trade partner of Belarus. It exercises full control over the supply and transit of power engineering raw materials. Ever more Belarussian enterprises become formally and informally (the latter one happens more often) dependent on the Russian capital. The interest of the Russian investors in the Belarussian market, which has risen during the election period, indicates that they count on economic benefit in return for the political and financial support they have lent to Alaxandr Lukashenka.

4. Because it wants to maintain its influence on the military situation in the westernmost territory of the Union State, Russia attaches great importance to military integration. For Belarus, on the other hand, the ever closer co-operation with the Russian army, the Russian aid and guarantees are the only way to maintain its military potential, although at the same time they deepen the already strong dependence of the Belarussian defence system on Moscow.

**The Belarussian secret services, seen in the context of an institutional and staff-related continuity (the majority of its members have previously been working in the Soviet services), and also unlimited possibilities of obtaining information by the Russian secret services, is in fact an instrument of political control of Russia over Belarus.** In principle the Belarussian secret services do not have any possibility to operate without Russia knowing it, let alone to act against Russia. On the other hand, Russia may conduct its operations in both Belarus itself and from its territory.

## Integration process of Russia and Belarus

Under Boris Yeltsin the Moscow's strive to keep Belarus in the zone of its direct influence was reflected in the process of integration of the two countries. In 1996–1999 consecutive union structures were set up. The Belarus-Russia Community (02.04.1996), the Belarus-Russia Union (02.04.1997), The Union State of Belarus and Russia (08.12.1999). This process has enjoyed full support of the Belarussian authorities, who have more than once come up with unification initiatives taking into account various kinds of benefit following from the integration (for example abolishing customs border between the countries). Belarus could also count on financial aid from Russia (debt relief, non-repayable loans). Moreover, in the unification process Alaxandr Lukashenka has seen an opportunity for him to come onto the Russian political scene.

On 8 December 1999 an agreement was signed on the founding of the Union State which replaced the Belarus-Russia Union. It envisages full unification of both countries in the future but it does not, however, specify the rules according to which the integration should follow. What is characteristic is the fact that the Constitution of the Union State, which is presently in the making, does not determine the division of competence among the union and the state bodies of Belarus and Russia. So far, none of the permanent union bodies has been set up. The union's budget is fixed annually for a symbolic – given the needs – amount of 70m USD.

Under Boris Yeltsin presidency the crucial significance was attached to the propaganda dimension of the integration process used by the presidents of both countries. In Vladimir Putin's attempt to rationalise the relations with Belarus the ideological aspect of the Union State has receded into the background. The unification rhetoric has been very much subdued. President Putin continues with the process of unification to such an extent as it contributes to the consolidation of Russian control over the political and economic processes in Belarus, without entailing too high expenditure. The integration initiatives taken up by Putin, so far devoid of real significance, are supposed to ensure optimum conditions for the possible integration with Belarus. An example of such an initiative might be the implementation of an agreement on common currency of the Union State signed on 30 November 2000. It does not have to lead to the real introduction of a common currency, nevertheless it does oblige Belarus to introduce changes in its monetary and economic policy along the Russian line. For Belarus the con-

sent to a single centre of issuing the common currency, provided for in the agreement, means giving up one of its attributes of national sovereignty to the advantage of Moscow.

Striving all the time to consolidate its influence, Russia has begun to limit the cost related to this process. Guided by its own interest, Russia is currently withdrawing from those regulations which make it suffer losses, it makes the weaker partner to accept what is not always an beneficial solution (Russia often explains its moves as following from the existence of the Union State, by the way), it is less willing to sponsor the Belarussian economy. Consequently, the Russian control has started to be a nuisance to Belarus and its leader. The necessity for a constant subordination to Moscow weakens the position of Alaxandr Lukashenka in the internal arena, and also makes him limit his political ambitions related directly to Russia. After the takeover of power in Kremlin the Union State that Lukashenka has supported is now becoming a trap he might fall in.

**The Union State is currently the political goal neither for Minsk, nor for Moscow, it serves only as an instrument which keeps Belarus dependent on Russia. The basic instruments of Russian control over Belarus are numerous non-union related, formal and informal possibilities to influence the Belarussian politics, economy and defence.**

## The areas of dependencies and influence

The extent of Belarussian dependence on Russia and the mechanisms governing it are visible in several intermingled areas:

- a) internal policy
- b) foreign policy
- c) economy
- d) defence and security.

### a. internal policy

**Owing to the fact that the Belarussian president attaches great importance to the Russian support of his internal policy Russia has a constant possibility to influence his decisions, which it willingly does.** This has been particularly well visible during the period of presidential election in Belarus. For the last couple of months one could witness this kind of election game going on between the Kremlin authorities and Lukashenka. Russia was withholding its support for any of the candidates until

the very last moment. It seemed that lending support to the president in office would be the best solution from the Russian point of view, yet the signals coming from Moscow could have aroused Lukashenka's anxiety. He was denied meeting President Putin several times. The Russian television kept presenting his opponents. The Russian papers regularly published articles on Moscow losing patience with the activities of the current leader and the necessity to introduce changes. This atmosphere of uncertainty has been further fuelled by leaks coming from the Belarussian secret services (their source has not been determined for sure) on what is called death squadrons. It seems that once Russia has decided to support Lukashenka it wanted to gain as much as possible. One of the more obvious concessions made by Lukashenka in that period was the fixing of export rates for oil and its products on the Russian level. For Belarus this decision meant a considerable reduction of profitable (but bringing annual loss of 70m USD to Russia<sup>1</sup>) re-export of the Russian raw material to third markets. Lukashenka's consent to exempting Belarus from the regulations of part II of the Tax Code, introduced by Russia into the trade with the CIS countries, has been interpreted by observers as a result of the striving for Russia's favour. According to the provisions of the Code, VAT is charged in the country of destination of an exported product, which would be a very favourable solution to Belarus due to a high adverse balance of trade with Russia<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, the Kremlin has chosen to support Lukashenka in the election. One of the signals of this support has been the payment of the first tranche of credit allowed to Belarus a year before. This success has had to be paid with further concessions. Every tranche of the promised credit, in total amount of 100m USD, was to be paid after Belarus had met certain specific conditions. One of the conditions for the payment of the first tranche was, among others, the consent to the establishing of a single centre for issuing the future common currency of Belarus and Russia in Moscow. The Russian support has become one of the main trumps of Lukashenka in the election. It entailed first of all the loyalty of the nomenclature, the behaviour of which during the election the president seemed to fear most. The significance attached to the support of Moscow may be confirmed by the fact that Lukashenka's opponents were striving for it as well.

Lukashenka, who has been boycotted by the Western countries for the last two years, has proved that he is able to perform his function without their recognition. His post-election speech has been very characteristic, he has stated that the constitution of

Belarus does not demand that any other country should accept the results of the election, it is enough that the nation has accepted them. Last year's parliamentary election demonstrated that it is enough that Russia recognised the results as democratic to make them legally valid on the internal political scene.

The Russian media, generally present all over the country, are also an instrument of affecting the internal situation in Belarus. The ORT and RTR television channels, available free of charge to the receivers in Belarus, are here of particular importance. The programmes they offer are regarded as more credible than the propaganda-saturated programme of the Belarussian television. They are also watched much more willingly. According to NISEP<sup>3</sup> opinion poll from August 2001 the Russian ORT is the most popular TV channel among Belarussians, it enjoys the ratings of more than 93%. The second place was taken by RTR channel, which is watched by more than 80% of Belarussians<sup>4</sup>. The popularity of the Russian channels is even more important in the context of the fact that the Kremlin exercises constant and ever stronger control over the contents of the programmes.

The cultural vicinity of both countries has its influence on the Belarus-Russia relationship as well. The sense of a linguistic and religious bond, a common history they share, and the nostalgia for the Soviet times when Belarus was one of the best developed republics – all these factors mean that the policy of integration with Russia enjoys the support of the majority of the Belarussian society.

In a survey conducted by Nowak<sup>5</sup> in April 2001 59.9% of Belarussians were in favour of invigorating the unification process, 17.2% were against the integration of Belarus and Russia. In a referendum 57.6% of the polled would vote in favour of combining Russia and Belarus in a single state, 25.6% would vote against such a solution<sup>6</sup>. The pro-Russian attitude is encouraged by both official propaganda and the media, and by the Belarussian Orthodox Church<sup>7</sup>, subordinate to the Moscow patriarchate.

## **b. common foreign policy**

Russia is the only partner of Belarus which matters in the world. It has a clear influence on the Belarussian foreign policy and plays a considerable part in defining the Minsk position in the international arena.

The foreign policy convergence is one of the best-implemented guidelines of the Union State agreement at the moment. Consultations among Foreign Ministers of both countries are held regu-

larly. On the international forum Belarus is practically of the same opinion as Russia on the majority of issues.

The cooperation with Russia is a basic element of the Belarussian foreign policy. It is difficult to imagine Belarus existing internationally without the support of its protector. Isolated by the West, Belarus concentrates on the contacts with the CIS countries and other countries for which the cooperation with Russia has a fundamental significance. Russia represents Belarus towards the countries of the West, supports its striving to regain an observer status in the Council of Europe and condemns all attempts of the Western countries to interfere in the internal affairs of Belarus. Russia recognises the regime of Alaxandr Lukashenka and in this way it is trying to legitimise his rule in the international arena. Its patronage and neighbourhood are a guarantee that the Belarussian president does not need to take into account the opinion of the West, coming out in support of democracy and human rights in Belarus. The attitude of the European countries and of the United States, appealing to Moscow for a democratisation of the rule in Minsk, basically confirms the fact that in the Belarussian affairs a deciding voice belongs to Russia<sup>8</sup>.

It is also possible that Russia often treats the cooperation with Belarus as an instrument of conducting concurrent unofficial foreign policy in specific areas.

The convergence of the Vladimir Putin and Alaxandr Lukashenka's calendar of travels to what is called rogue states, allows to assume that foreign visits of both leaders have something in common. In July the opposition Belarussian press, quoting Israeli sources, accused Belarus, also on behalf of Russia, of arms trade – with the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and with the embargoed countries, first of all with Iraq<sup>9</sup>. The Belarussian Foreign Ministry denied this information, but many analysts consider it to be quite probable.

## **c. economy**

A strong dependence on Russia is also visible in the Belarussian economy, particularly in trade and power engineering industry. The dominating presence of the Russian capital in the Belarussian market makes it easier for Russia to affect the situation in Belarus.

Russia has been, and still is the main trade partner of Belarus. In 2000 the trade exchange with Russia accounted for more than 58%<sup>10</sup> of the total value of the Belarussian trade exchange (for Russia it was only 6%<sup>11</sup> of its foreign trade value). In the recent

years we have seen a steady increase in the significance of the Russian import, last year its share in the total value of the Belarussian import accounted for 65%<sup>12</sup>. Belarus imports from Russia mainly power engineering raw materials – there is no alternative source of supply, as a matter of fact. In 2000 Belarussian deficit in trade with Russia amounted to 1.8 million USD. The constantly high oil prices in the world markets have influenced the process of leading to such high adverse balance. Before the rises in oil prices the trade turnover between Belarus and Russia was practically balanced<sup>13</sup> (see table p. 60).

A considerable part of the trade exchange takes places on the basis of barter, which also deepens the Belarussian dependence on Russia. In 2000 Belarus settled 27% of the import from Russia in commodities, which equalled 43%<sup>14</sup> of the Belarussian output export to Russia. Non-pecuniary transactions involve better quality goods, which could be sold at free market prices. The majority of the remaining output does not find purchasers and goes to warehouses<sup>15</sup>. For some time now one can observe the process of limiting barter and switching to settlements of accounts in cash, initiated by Russia. Attempts to make the trade relations with Russia more economical may lead to a decrease in attractiveness of the Russian market to Belarus and they may become a stimulus to seek new trade partners more actively. The year 2000 saw an increase in the Belarussian export to other countries, particularly to the markets of the closest neighbours – Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and the Ukraine. The Russian share in the Belarussian export diminished from 65% in 1998 to 51%<sup>16</sup> in 2000. (see table p. 60).

The power engineering sector in Belarus relies in 88%<sup>17</sup> on raw materials imported from abroad. The Belarussian import of power engineering raw materials is under total control of Russia. With the annual gas consumption at the level of 16.2 billion m<sup>3</sup><sup>18</sup> only 30 million m<sup>3</sup> come from the Belarussian deposits<sup>19</sup>. 100% of gas imported by Belarus comes from Russia.

Russia keeps the gas price for Belarus at a very low level. For 2001 the price was fixed at 30 USD per 1000 m<sup>3</sup><sup>20</sup>, whereas for the same gas the Ukraine pays Gazprom 80 USD per 1000 m<sup>3</sup><sup>21</sup>. Despite this fact Belarus is not able to settle its dues as they come. In 2000 the Belarussian debt to Gazprom increased from 47 million USD at the beginning of the year to 244 million USD in October<sup>22</sup>. The way Gazprom operates is often convergent with the Kremlin interests and this is often used by the Kremlin as a tool in foreign policy. The enforcement of debt repayments, their writing-off, or postponing in time become in this way another

instrument by means of which Russia may exert its pressure on Belarus.

The remaining branches of power engineering sector are also very much dependent on the Russian raw materials. Belarus imports 75% of the oil it consumes. Almost the whole of import comes from Russia<sup>23</sup>.

An important potential trump card for Belarus in the contacts with Russia is its transit location. Around 50%<sup>24</sup> of oil and around 10%<sup>25</sup> of gas exported by Russia goes to the West via Belarus. The existing transmission infrastructure would allow the transmission of much larger quantities of these raw materials<sup>26</sup>. The dependence of Belarus on Russia in the field of raw materials weakens, however, the possibilities of taking advantage of its location. And so, for example, in order to maintain a low price of the imported gas Belarus charges Gazprom one third of the internationally accepted transit rate for its transmission to the West. This amount due is settled by Gazprom in part of the gas supplied<sup>27</sup>. When Gazprom brought down the price of gas to Belarus from 30 USD per 1000 m<sup>3</sup> to 26.9 USD in 2000, which according to official sources was to be a direct benefit from the implementation of the agreement founding the Union State, some experts highlighted the fact that because the price reduction was related to an increase in transit after the Yamal gas pipeline had started to operate, the gas became in fact more expensive if we take into account the proportion of an increase in transit and the reduction in price.

Russia controls also the whole Belarussian electric energy market. It is true that Belarus generates about 75% of the energy it needs itself, but it is always obtained through the process of combustion of the Russian gas and oil<sup>28</sup>. 85%<sup>29</sup> of the missing energy is imported from Russia and the remaining part – from Lithuania. Due to an increasing debt, which amounted to 56 million USD for the period 1998–99, Lithuania ceased its supplies. In May 2000 Lithuania, Belarus and Russia signed a trilateral agreement, pursuant to which Russia took over the Belarussian claims and it became a guarantor of the Lithuanian energy supplies. In June 2000 Lithuania resumed the supplies to Belarus from a nuclear power plant in Ignalina. In return, the Russian company Energia (Energy) supplies Lithuania with nuclear fuel. Belarus settles its dues to Russia in commodities<sup>30</sup>.

More and more Belarussian enterprises become dependent on the Russian capital<sup>31</sup>, mostly in an informal way. Recently there have been much information in the Russian and the Belarussian press on the intentions to privatise – with the share of foreign capital – several of the most important Belarussian enterprises,

such as Naftan refinery and Polimir and Azot, chemical processing enterprises. There has also been much information about the reported plans of Ruskiy Aluminiiy (Russian Aluminium company) to take over a control package in the Minsk Automobile Plant MAZ, which satisfies 30% of the Russian market demand for lorries<sup>32</sup> and is one of the pillars of the Belarussian economy.

It is known that attempts are being made to take control over Belarussian enterprises within the framework of a debt settlement scheme. The Russian gas suppliers Gazprom and Itera – the largest creditors of Belarus – seem to be the most active in this field. In April 2000 Itera obtained shares in the Mohilou Chimvolokno. It is trying to become a shareholder in the Novopolotsk Naftan refinery.

For quite some time many enterprises have been in the area of Russian interest. So far, however, Alaxandr Lukashenka has been trying to maintain control over the most important enterprises and he has deferred the decision on their privatisation. The interest of the Russian capital in these enterprises, enhanced in the pre-election period, indicates that the Russian investors count on economic benefit in return for the political and financial support given to Alaxandr Lukashenka<sup>33</sup>. It seems that presently a game is being played between Lukashenka, who wishes to maintain the control over the largest number of enterprises which are important for Belarus, and the Russian investors, who have the political and economic means to take over this control.

The next privatisation decisions taken by the Belarussian president will show to whom he has had to make concessions and to what extent.

#### d. defence and security

**The will to maintain its influence on the military situation in the westernmost area of the Union State<sup>34</sup> means that Russia attaches great importance to military integration. For Belarus the ever closer co-operation with the Russian army, the aid and guarantees given by Russia are the only way to maintain a military potential of its own, although at the same time they deepen the already strong dependence of the Belarussian defence system on Moscow.** In the field of defence the Russian involvement in Belarus manifests itself first of all in investments in the military infrastructure. One of the first investments of such kind has been the supply of equipment to the bases in Baranovichi, Vileyka and Vitebsk. The only unit of the Russian armed forces present in Belarus is stationed in the base of

the radiolocation station in Baranovichi<sup>35</sup>. For the last few years the countries have concluded a series of agreements on military cooperation, providing for the modernising of the Belarussian army according to the Russian model of reform. Also the preliminary drawn up defence doctrine of the Union State is practically a repetition of a parallel Russian document and it provides for the adaptation of Belarus to the standards of its stronger neighbour.

**The Belarussian army is not able to function effectively when separated from the structures and the material-technological background of the Russian army.** It does not conduct exercises on its own above the tactical level. The first formally independent action were the Neman-2001 manoeuvres (organised in the eve of the presidential election, for political reasons first of all, not for military ones), which in fact became a test of the extent of integration of both armies. During the manoeuvres the air forces and air defence forces were performing their tasks as one kind of armed forces, the way it is in the Russian army. The main headquarters of ground troops was developed along the same lines as it is in the Russian structures. Also for the first time the manoeuvres were attended by the border protection forces and railway troops, the KGB troops and the Ministry of Internal Affairs forces, the participation of which had not been envisaged by the Belarussian strategy of national defence, as opposed to the Russian one. The speech made by Alaxandr Lukashenka after he had visited the military training ground was symptomatic – he declared with great content that the Belarussian army was fully prepared to defend the Russian interests<sup>36</sup>.

**In the context of an institutional and staff-related continuity (the majority of its members have previously been working in the Soviet services), and also unlimited possibilities to obtain information the Belarussian security sector is in fact an instrument of political control of Russia over Belarus.** The security structures of both countries are compatible. The structural changes introduced by Belarus after the break-up of the Soviet Union served to adapt to the new Russian standards. An example of this kind of action was the establishing of the President Security Service last year, which was modelled exactly on the Russian solution. **The Belarussian secret services do not in fact have any possibility to operate without Russia knowing it, let alone to act against Russia. Russia, on the other hand, may conduct its operations in both Belarus itself and from its territory without any limitations.**

This is possible owing to a number of Russian-Belarussian legal regulations<sup>37</sup> and multilateral agreements, concluded within the

CIS framework, and also to a far-reaching informal influence on the Belarussian secret services. The boss of the Belarussian KGB is Leonid Yerin, a Russian, until 1995 the head of the FSB delegation in the Moscow district. The Belarussian services regularly conduct common operations and have exercises with the Russian FSB. Due to very limited possibilities of its own foreign intelligence, Belarus makes use of the help offered by the Russian intelligence; similarly to other forces the Belarussian KGB uses the Russian technological equipment. The heads of ministries hold regular meetings, in the recent years even at the level of the Belarussian *oblasti*. One cannot underestimate the fact that officers in both countries have very often developed close personal ties among one another, the majority of them had graduated from the same KGB school in Minsk during the Soviet Union era. Such bonds are enhanced by frequently organised KGB and FSB personnel meetings, which have a social character. This is conducive to blurring the differences between them and it also preserves the current system of full dependence on the Russian partner. In every region, not only in the capital, as it is the case in the rest of the CIS countries, there are permanent representatives of the Russian services. In practice this means that Russia and Belarus constitute in fact a common security area, characterised by dominating Russian influence, presently reaching as far as the regional level.

## The prospects for the Belarussian-Russian relations

**For the next few years one should not expect the integration of Belarus and Russia into one political organism**, either within the framework of the Union State, or along other principles specified by Russia. Such process would be too expensive to Russia, in both political and economic aspect. This does not mean, however, that certain elements of the integration policy, the purpose of which is to consolidate the Russian control over Belarus, shall not be implemented. In the near future the Belarussian president will be subject to a pressure from Russia, which wants to lead to some convenient changes in the Belarussian economic system, first of all to privatisation of the national property with the dominating share of the Russian capital. One can expect that Alaxandr Lukashenka will try to defer these decisions in time, aware as he is of the fact that depriving the country of its property will mean the loss of his most important trump cards in the relations with Russia. It seems, however, that at the end of the day

he will have to yield to the pressure. This will probably be due to the fact that his pre-election agreements oblige him to make concessions, but first of all because the unreformed Belarussian economy needs investment and many factors do indicate that the country's internal financial means, also those budget-independent resources like – what is called – presidential funds, are running low. Some kind of solution could emerge if Belarus opened itself up to the Western investors and capital, particularly from Germany, where for a few years now the investors have been putting considerable hopes with the Belarussian market. It seems, however, that due to the strong links of the Belarussian economy to politics it would be exactly the Russian capital, which would enjoy an advantageous position in relation to a possible privatisation process. The takeover of the most important Belarussian enterprises by foreign investors would infringe upon one of the pillars of Lukashenka's power exercising system – a direct control over the economy, which allows to implement a specific social policy. This would lead in the first place to a dramatic growth of unemployment, which so far has been maintained at an artificially low level, and this would also make the regulation of wages from on-high impossible. In this context one may assume that all this would result in a definite intensification of an anti-presidential atmosphere. The position of Lukashenka would be additionally weakened by the fact that according to the Belarussian constitution the second term of office he has just started is his last one. When deprived of social support the president would seek it in Russia. One could suppose that the possible support lent by Russia to help Lukashenka remain in power would cost Belarus more political and economic concessions.

There is some likelihood that Lukashenka will try to consolidate his position<sup>38</sup> by, among others, a certain hardening of his attitude in the contacts with Russia. It does not mean, however, that he will change his policy for a pro-Western one. The possible attempts to improve the relationship with the West would serve to legitimise his rule and to obtain financial aid.

There is currently no significant political force in Belarus, which would declare the will to loosen the bonds with Russia, even very slightly. The opposition has been dominated by the pro-Russian nomenclature, characterised by a rebellious attitude towards Lukashenka. All the candidates to run for the presidential election, apart from Zianon Pazniak, who is already on the margin of the Belarussian politics, have declared their intention to deepen the preferential relations with Russia. Many of them have visited Moscow in the campaign time, seeking support. It is difficult to ima-

gine that for the next few years the opposition circles should undergo such a transformation which could give the forces striving to make Belarus independent on Russia an advantageous position, even more so that the pro-Russian option enjoys a strong social support.

The shape of the Belarussian political scene and many other strong political, economic and military dependencies joining Belarus with Russia allow to presume that regardless of the possible changes in the internal policy the Russian influence in Belarus will consolidate and expand.

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<sup>1</sup> *Country Analysis Brief – An overview of the energy in Belarus*, EIA report, December 2000, [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)

<sup>2</sup> The Belarus' balance of trade with Russia remains negative even when you subtract the value of oil and gas imports, which have been exempted from the Code's provisions.

<sup>3</sup> Independent Institute of Social, Economic and Political Research – Belarussian opinion poll centre.

<sup>4</sup> After „Poll suggest second round in presidential election”, *RFE/RL Poland, Belarus and the Ukraine Report*, 04.09.2001, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

<sup>5</sup> A Belarussian opinion poll centre.

<sup>6</sup> At the same time in the same opinion poll 45.7% of Belarussians asked about a unification model declared, that they expected that Russian and Belarus would remain sovereign states, closely cooperating in the fields of economy and defence. This is due to a conviction created by the official propaganda that the integration with Russia is not at variance with keeping the national sovereignty.

<sup>7</sup> The Minsk exarch, Filaret, is subordinate to the patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexiy II and he is amember of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>8</sup> Such an appeal was included, for example, in aCongress resolution from May 2000. In a joint analysis carried out by the planning departments of the Foreign Ministries of France and Germany Belarus was also placed in the zone of direct Russian influence.

<sup>9</sup> „Belarus' postavlayet oruzhe ekstremistam?”, *Narodnaya Wolya*, no. 134, 26.07.2001, see also „Jomkiy pokupateli”, *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazieta*, no. 56, 10.10.2001.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus.

<sup>11</sup> According to the statistics of the State Customs Committee of the Russian Federation.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus.

<sup>13</sup> do.

<sup>14</sup> A statement made by the Belarussian Deputy Prime Minister, Leanid Kozik, for Interfax agency, Interfax, 05.04.2001.

<sup>15</sup> According to data from 2000 more than 60% of the Belarussian output ends up in warehouses; after „Zhdat' ostalos' niedolgo”, *Expiert*, no. 42, 06.11.2000.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus.

<sup>17</sup> *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>18</sup> *Statistical Review of World Energy*, British Petroleum report, June 2001, [www.bp.com](http://www.bp.com)

<sup>19</sup> *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>20</sup> ib.

<sup>21</sup> *Nacionalna bezpeka ioborona*, 2, 2001, Ukrainskiy Centr Ekonomichnykh i Politychnykh doslidzen imeni Olexandra Razumkwa.

<sup>22</sup> *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> ib.

<sup>24</sup> ib.

<sup>25</sup> Calculations made by the authors on the basis of data on sending gas through the Yamal gas pipeline; PAP dispatch 26.10.2000

<sup>26</sup> In 2000 the first string of the Yamal gas pipeline transmitted 12 billion m<sup>3</sup> of gas, while its capacity is estimated for about 33 billion m<sup>3</sup> of gas annually, PAP, 26.10.2000.

<sup>27</sup> According to Piotr Pietuch, the CEO of Bieltransgas, 13% of the amount due for gas is covered by the cost of its transit via the Belarussian territory to the West, *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>28</sup> Around 71% of the electric energy generated by Belarus comes from gas combustion, around 29% from the combustion of oil, 0.01% of energy is generated by hydro-electric power station; *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>29</sup> Calculations made by the authors on the basis of data on export from the Russian Customs Committee and on the basis of data on import from the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus.

<sup>30</sup> *Country Analysis Brief*, op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> Due to the lack of statistical data we can describe this process only on the basis of individual cases.

<sup>32</sup> After „Lukashenko oddast' MAZ”, *Viedomosti*, 28.08.2001.

<sup>33</sup> Just before the election several visits were paid in Belarus, for example by the bosses of Itera, Russkiy Aluminii (Russian Aluminium company), LUKoil, who declared their support for Lukashenka and the will to invest in Belarus. The representatives of the Russian business were also present at the ceremony of re-taking the presidential oath by the Belarussian president.

<sup>34</sup> Apart from the Kaliningrad district, the significance of which is limited by its separation from the compact territory of the Union State.

<sup>35</sup> The station in Baranovitchi is one of the elements of the Russian system of early warning against missile attack, the only one on the northatlantic direction after the Russian station in Skrunda in Latvia was closed down in 1998.



<sup>36</sup> The fact that the inspection of the units of the Russian Federation and the Republik of Belarus, which were conducting their exercise, was carried out by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian air forces is also meaningful. The Belarussian Defence Minister took part in the inspection as a guest.

<sup>37</sup> Including the agreements concluded within the framework of the Union State.

<sup>38</sup> The first symptoms of Lukashenko's strive to consolidate his position are changes in the structure of government. The establishing of the ministries of power engineering and information is to increase the possibility of direct control over these two important areas.

Geographical structure of the Belarussian trade exchange (data in billions USD)

	1998	1999	2000
<b>Total value of trade exchange</b>	15.6	12.6	15.8
Export	7.0	5.9	7.3
Import	8.5	6.7	8,5
Balance	-1.5	-0.7	-1.1
<b>Trade exchange with Russia</b>	9.3	7.0	9.3
Export	4.6	3.2	3.8
Import	4.7	3.8	5.5
Balance	-0.06	-0.5	-1.8
<b>Trade exchange with the CIS countries (without Russia)</b>	1.4	0.9	1.1
Export	0.6	0.4	0.6
Import	0.8	0.5	0.5
Balance	-0.2	-0.1	0.1
<b>Trade exchange with the countries which do not belong to CIS</b>	4.9	4.7	5.4
Export	1.9	2.3	2.9
Import	3.0	2.4	2.5
Balance	-1.1	-0.1	0.4

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus

Geographical structure of the Belarussian trade exchange (data in percentage to total)

	1998	1999	2000
<b>Trade exchange with Russia</b>	59	55	59
Export	65	54	51
Import	55	56	65
<b>Trade exchange with the CIS countries (without Russia)</b>	10	8	7
Export	8	7	9
Import	10	8	6
<b>Trade exchange with the countries which do not belong to CIS</b>	31	37	34
Export	27	39	40
Import	10	8	6

Calculations made by the authors on the basis of data from the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus